

William Gaines House, Quarters  
(Gaines Farm Quarters)  
Near Mechanicsville  
Hanover County  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-78

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43-MECHA.4,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

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QUARTERS AT WILLIAM GAINES HOUSE  
Near Mechanicsville, Hanover County, Virginia

Date of erection: Eighteenth century

Present condition: Poor

Description:

The building is of frame, weatherboarded, above a brick foundation laid in English bond. It is a story and a half high with a gable roof and inside end chimney. A curious feature is the treatment of the plan at the east end, where two small sleeping rooms were developed and roofed with shed extensions from the main roof. The plan is therefore T-shaped and almost square, in overall sizes being 26 feet 1½ inches by 26 feet 2 inches. The breadth of the main building is 14 feet 2 inches and of the projections 3 feet 2 inches.

The elevation of the main section is typical, with a center door at either side, probably once without flanking windows, as in the case of the south side. In the west end are two square four-light windows, one in either floor. The cubicles have similar windows, one in either sidewall. The east elevation is perhaps unique in Virginia and has an extraordinary character of its own. The unbroken wall is the entire width of the building and rises to the apex of the gable 18 feet 4 inches above the foundation. From here it descends symmetrically to a point about 4 feet above grade at the eaves of the cubicles. At present there are only two windows, the small square ones mentioned before. Previously, however, there were two similar windows high up in the gable.

In plan the big room or kitchen has a large chimney at the east and between the cubicles. The latter are broad enough to have doors into the kitchen on their inside walls. The main feature of the kitchen is its framing, which shows in the sidewalls where the plate, posts, sills, and door-jamb studs are exposed. The ceiling is plastered, but originally may have been open-timbered. The mantel is built up of fragments and must have been interesting and unusual in its original form. A plain board facing now frames the fireplace opening (which is blocked) of 4 feet 3 inches by 5 feet. The original opening seems to have been 4 feet 8 inches by 4 feet 10 inches and vertical in shape. The mantel shelf is 1-3/8 inches thick and is moulded at the edge. It is supported by two board brackets at either end cut to a profile. Applied under the shelf is a thin board 6 feet 3½ inches long cut with an elaborate scallop. No design for the original mantel could be deduced. Some distance above the mantel the chimney breaks back in a semi-hooded form. Beyond the plastered chimney breast the end wall is weatherboarded. A derelict ~~sign~~ was found with 1¼-inch wide muntins.

Author: Thomas Waterman  
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Addendum to  
Quarters at William Gaines House  
Mechanicsville  
Hanover County  
Virginia

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

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